

**Chris O'Brien**

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**From:** Quatia Osorio <journ3i@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 13, 2021 1:00 PM  
**To:** House Finance Committee  
**Cc:** Rep. Abney, Marvin L.  
**Subject:** Budget Article 12 Section 12d and bill H5929 The Doula Reimbursement Act .

Chairperson Abney and members of the House Committee on Finance,

**I am in strong support of Budget Article 12 Section 12d and bill H5929 The Doula Reimbursement Act .**

My name is Quatia Osorio. I am a Providence native, residing on the North end of Providence. A graduate of Bryant University, and Mother of 5. I am a Certified Perinatal Doula and the owner of Our Journ3i, LLC.

I began my training with a community responsive GoFund me to pay for my training and travel to Brooklyn, NY in 2015 to become a trained community-based Full Spectrum Doula. A [community-based doula](#) is a Doula who specializes in addressing the inequities and injustices around maternal health with a community-focused lens, as a member of the community being served. I was born in this community, I live in this community, and I serve this community. A Full Spectrum Doula means I am trained in birth, postpartum, and bereavement/loss, as well as special considerations around abortion support and miscarriage.

Over the course of several years as a doula I have continued my professional development adding certifications to advance my scope as a doula, Certified Lactation Counselor, Certified Community Health Worker, Maternal Child Health Specialist, Maternal Community Health Worker. I am currently attending Thomas Jefferson University for my second bachelors in Health Services Management to eventually own the first Black owned birth center in the state of Rhode Island. I have hosted and attending doula trainings, continuing to refresh my knowledge of my practice and scope.

Our Journ3i has a long history of collaboration with community organizations, quasi-government, public, private, education, and national platforms. Our primary focus is addressing Black Maternal mortality disparities and social health determinants that influence adverse maternal health and birth outcomes. As you are aware of this crucial legislation, for this very issue.

As one of the forerunners around this legislation, I am contacting you for support, because [Black women are DYING](#), but support around the **EQUITY** of this bill. This bill is for BOTH Medicaid and Employer-based insurance. I can not stress how imperative a bill like this needs to prioritize both insurance coverage. Three reasons why supporting this bill not just for Medicaid but for both coverage is essential.

First, it dismantles the perpetuation that only "poor" or low-income families of color are adversely affected. Statistically, data has revealed that [regardless of socioeconomic status](#), systematic racism, and bias attacks at ALL levels for Black women. The data further states the more well off a Black woman is in education and socioeconomic status her chances for prematurity are elevated. [The CDC PRMR reports that Black educated and older women are 5x greater at risk for adverse birth outcomes including mortality than their White counter parts.](#)

Secondly, it negates the high probability of Black women not being served based on the primarily allocated finances for this bill set by Governor McKee. The [population of Black women and families of color are disproportionately leveraged in favor of the White population](#). We have a growing workforce of Black/Brown doulas with cultural congruent care and humility to serve their representative communities. We need to allow this to expand and flourish to reduce harm within the social determinants of health outcomes in population health. Remember the Black Maternal health epidemic predates the Covid pandemic. Allows this bill to alleviate some of the burden on new families, especially those already in dire circumstances without assistance to adequately navigate.

Thirdly, this a necessary innovative economic development opportunity intertwined with the humane moral compass of our communities. New families are on transformative journeys and need to be supported, access resources, provided education and opportunities for the best chance, right from the start. The birth of a child, the birth of a New Mother, New Father, and New Parent are milestones in our lives that we all hope to look on with great joy, not trauma and tolerance. No matter the outcome. Doulas, though the term is new, have been around since the beginning of time, are trained in assisting the family outside of the family structure, working in collaboration with the medical care team for effective communication, evidence-based education and localized resources to provide the perinatal needs of the family. Black and brown families due to racial wage disparity continue to make less even with the same training and education. RI the rate for a Black woman is [59 cents](#) on the dollar-based on National Women's Law Center.

We can not continue to do the same work, support Medicaid only initiatives, leave the community to fight for whatever is handed to them, and hope for the best. As a Black Mother, Black professional, and birth trauma survivor I ask that you consider not only providing your support behind this legislation but that yourself, your family present, and future as recipients of the future services myself and others look to provide. Seek to the requirement of commercial linked employer-based insurance companies to get behind our families, along with Medicaid, to support the overdue necessary changes we need for a better community. This data of high Black Maternal mortality and morbidity is not new to RI, but this bill is new and necessary for the change we hope to bring.

Every time we say, "no" and consider costs we say one life in maternal health danger is expendable. We say another near-miss is OKAY because of our budget. We say another loss isn't bad. We say that obstetric violence, coercion in care and ill-informed consent is the fine on our watch. We need to change that narrative and say we value the bodies that give birth to our FUTURE. We value the childbearing rights to give birth with dignity and integrity, supported and cared for by services we support in our General Assembly.

In closing, I urge you to support Budget Article 12 Section 12d and bill H5929 The Doula Reimbursement Act.

Sincerely,

Quatia Osorio  
Providence, Rhode Island

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